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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Denied

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**100th Congress, 2nd Session**

	House	Senate
<b>Democrats</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Republicans</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Vacancies</b>	<b>3 *</b>	<b>0</b>

\* Rep. James J. Howard, D-N.J., died March 25, 1988. Rep. John J. Duncan, R-Tenn., died June 21, 1988. Rep. Mario Biaggi, D-N.Y., resigned Aug. 5, 1988.

for HR 791, a groundwater-protection bill passed by the House on Dec. 2, 1987.

The Moynihan proposal differs from the House version by providing 50 percent matching grants to states that implement groundwater-management programs. The Senate bill costs about half as much as its House counterpart.

Both House and Senate bills authorize the Environmental Protection Agency, along with several other federal agencies, to establish coordinated research programs to study the effects of contaminated groundwater, clean up undrinkable supplies, and monitor groundwater quality and quantity.

Environment Committee aide Nan Stockholm said the legislation would probably reach the Senate floor the week of Sept. 26. Because the Senate and House proposals are similar, Stockholm said she expected a conference committee to approve a final version before Congress adjourns.

## Government Operations

### ✓ House Passes Veterans' Health Bill

Legislation aimed at improving health care programs for veterans by beefing up hospital staffs and extending drug- and alcohol-abuse treatment programs was passed by the House Sept. 22 by a vote of 406-0. (Vote 333, p. 2676)

HR 5114 (H Rept 100-937, Part 1) would reauthorize Veterans Administration (VA) programs that allow the agency to contract with halfway houses and other facilities for treating veterans with drug and alcohol problems. Those programs are set to expire on Sept. 30. The bill also would provide pay incentives to attract and retain nurses at medical facilities for veterans. (p. 2624)

### ✓ Senate Clears 'Prompt-Payment' Bill

The Senate Sept. 23 cleared for the president a bill (S 328) that would make federal agencies pay penalties for late payment of bills to private businesses. By voice vote, the Senate concurred with amendments adopted by the House July 26.

The bill would amend the Prompt Payment Act of 1982 (PL 97-177) to ensure that federal contractors supplying goods and services are paid on time.

Before passing the bill, the Senate voted 54-33 to table an amendment by Charles E. Grassley, R-Iowa, aimed at making sure that the government collects more of the debt owed to it. Grassley's amendment would have created a 15-member panel to advise the government on how to collect its outstanding debts, which Grassley put at \$83 billion.

Members objected to the amendment on the grounds that it would have killed chances for enacting S 328 this year. (p. 2110)

### ✓ House Votes to Allow Agencies to Relocate

The House Sept. 20 passed by voice vote HR 2524, which would allow certain federal agencies to move their operations out of the District of Columbia to surrounding areas in suburban Virginia and Maryland.

The bill would not allow the main offices of the 13 Cabinet-level executive departments, such as Justice, State and Labor, to move out of Washington, D.C.

However, under the bill, thousands of employees of the federal government's independent agencies could find them-

selves working in Maryland or Virginia, which are part of the so-called National Capital region, as a result of the measure.

Proponents cited cost-savings as the main reason for passage of the bill. Rep. Glenn M. Anderson, D-Calif., said lease rates in the District of Columbia average \$27 to \$37 a square foot. In certain Maryland and Virginia suburbs those rates would be \$18 to \$31, he said.

The District of Columbia could lose a significant amount of revenue if the bill becomes law and federal agencies opt for new suburban locations.

### ✓ Senate Passes Computer-Matching Bill

New controls on the federal government's use of computerized records pertaining to individuals' income, employment and other personal matters would be set in place under a bill passed by the Senate on Sept. 20.

The so-called "computer-matching" bill, S 496, would regulate the use of computer cross-checks made by federal agencies to detect fraud, abuse or overpayments in government programs.

The bill would require federal agencies to establish safeguards to govern the release of records. It also would establish a "data integrity board" in every agency involved in computer-matching programs.

Furthermore, the bill would prohibit agencies from reducing, suspending or terminating financial assistance to individuals without first verifying the accuracy of the computerized data.

Similar legislation was passed last year by the Senate, but a bill (HR 4699 — H Rept 100-802) passed by the House Aug. 1 contained some changes. The Sept. 20 Senate action represented a further refinement of the House-passed measure, principally in an amendment by Sens. Carl Levin, D-Mich., and William S. Cohen, R-Maine, that shortens the notice requirements under the bill. For example, the federal government would give individuals 30 days to contest an adverse action that results from a computer match. As passed by the House, S 496 required 60 days' notice. (p. 2209)

## Housing/Community Development

### ✓ House Panel Votes Aid to 'Colonias'

A House subcommittee approved a measure Sept. 22 to direct money from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) programs to aid the so-called "colonias" along the Mexican border in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas.

The provisions, approved by the Banking Committee's Housing Subcommittee, are part of a more comprehensive bill (HR 4606) aimed at improving often squalid living conditions in the rural communities.

Colonias are unincorporated subdivisions along the 2,000-mile border between the United States and Mexico. Most lack water and sewage services, and many are also without electricity or gas utilities. State estimates indicate there are more than 300,000 people living in the colonias, according to a Housing Subcommittee memo.

HR 4606, introduced by Ronald D. Coleman, D-Texas, proposed directing housing assistance money to the communities through a new program. But the panel agreed instead to set aside some CDBG money for the communities and to require